

Release

from the South Carolina Forestry Commission



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SC Forestry Commission restricting access to State Forest offices and closing recreation facilities to public indefinitely

Recreation and parking permits still available online for horseback riding, ATVs, motorcycles and bicycles

In an effort to minimize the potential exposure and spread of coronavirus to the public as well as to its employees, the South Carolina Forestry Commission is restricting access to all five of its state forests' offices to the public, effective immediately.

While the forests will remain open to the public for horseback, ATV, motorcycle and bicycle riding, recreational permits for these activities, including for parking at Harbison State Forest, are now only accessible online. Forest visitors can obtain their recreational permits at the following website: <https://ssl.sc.gov/scfcpermitsales/>. Permits are not required for hikers using the trails on any of the state forests, and hunting is still allowed on Forestry Commission lands in the Wildlife Management Area (WMA) program.

In addition to closing its state forest offices to public traffic, the Forestry Commission is also:

- canceling or postponing all facility reservations and scheduled events, and not accepting new reservations for any time in the near future;
- closing all public facilities on the state forests (restrooms, meeting rooms, rental shelters, camping areas, cabins, rifle ranges);
- suspending the collection of money in person or through its iron rangers.

The state forest offices, the agency's headquarters and its other satellite offices remain open for business at this time, but with limited public access. The Forestry Commission will be posting phone numbers for people to call for assistance at each office location.

These restrictions will stay in effect until further notice, which will come in the form of an official announcement from the Forestry Commission after the public health threat subsides.

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In addition to being recreational hotspots for hiking, biking, hunting, camping and horseback riding, the Commission's state lands are demonstration forests for ecological responsibility and productivity. The state's second-largest manufacturing industry in terms of jobs and wages, forestry generates a \$21 billion impact on South Carolina's economy.

